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ABSTRACT

This booklet tells how parents can use all their language skills to build those of their children. The booklet is designed for helping children from infancy to age 6--the most important years for learning the skills they will need to become readers. It offers parents suggestions on how to: talk with their children; read aloud with him/her; help him/her learn about printed words and what they mean; show her/him that they value reading; and do other activities at home that encourage reading. To help show when children can take certain learning steps, the booklet ties much of the discussion to four age groups: baby (birth to 1 year); toddler (1 to 3 years); preschooler (ages 3 and 4); and kindergartner/early first grader (ages 5 and 6). A section discusses "If You Think There's a Problem." Contains a reading checklist, a list of typical language accomplishments for children, resources for families and caregivers, resources for children, and an 11-item bibliography. (NKA)

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Helping Your Child Become a Reader

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CS 013 807

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Helping Your Child Become a Reader

with activities for children from infancy through age 6

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with Kathryn Perkinson and Lance Ferderer

Illustrated by
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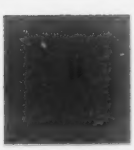
Helping Your Child Become a Reader is part of a series aimed at helping families participate in their children's learning. It updates *Helping Your Child Learn to Read,* published in 1993 and reprinted in 1997.



Foreword

As I travel across the country, I see firsthand what 30 years of research proves—children are more likely to succeed in their learning when their families actively support them. You give your children a tremendous advantage in school when you read to them, help them with homework, talk to their teachers, and participate in other ways. Doing this is especially important in such basic subjects as math and reading.

Being a successful reader is quite an accomplishment. It involves a lot of small steps that children take long before entering school. You help by talking, listening, singing, and reading to them every day. Before long, they are learning to identify things in books, link letters and sounds, write their first alphabet letters, and much more. Some of the most rewarding moments we experience as families come when we see our children's excitement as they achieve these steps. When they finally read their first book, nothing makes us prouder.

This booklet includes activities for families with children from infancy through age 6. These activities use materials found inside your home and make learning experiences out of everyday routines. The activities are designed for you to have fun with your children while helping them gain the skills they need to become good readers.

We hope you and your children will enjoy the activities suggested in this book and develop many more of your own. I commend you for being an involved family. Your commitment will encourage your children to reach their full potential.

Richard W. Riley
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education

A national test—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—is given every 4 years to see how well our children are reading. The 1998 test results showed that average reading scores increased over the 1994 scores for students in grades 4, 8, and 12. However, a large number—38 percent of our fourth-graders—have not met the basic reading standard set by the National Assessment Governing Board. Also in 1998, the National Academy of Sciences completed its landmark study *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.* It stresses how important it is to help very young children so that they can more easily grow into readers. It states:

> "The majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years."

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Introduction

You could say a baby starts on the road to becoming a reader the day she is born. Right away she hears sounds and sees movements. Every time you speak to her, sing to her, and respond to the sounds she makes, you strengthen her interest in language. With you and others there to guide her, she is on her way to becoming a reader.

Reading is an important part of language. In fact, you might think of language as a four-legged stool. The four legs are talking, listening, reading, and writing. All four legs are important; each helps support and balance the others.

This book tells how you can use all your language skills to build those of your child. It is designed for helping children from infancy to age 6—the most important years for learning the skills they will need to become readers. The book offers suggestions on how to

- talk with your child,
- read aloud with her,
- help her learn about printed words and what they mean,
- show her you value reading, and
- do other activities at home that encourage reading.

The book also tells you how you can prepare your child for school and gives lists of places you can contact for more reading help. But this guide is a starting point only. We hope you and your child will enjoy the activities in it enough to try many more on your own.

We all know that older children can do things that younger ones can't. This is true for reading, too. To help show when children can take certain learning steps, this book ties much of the discussion to four age groups:

Baby = birth to 1 year
Toddler = 1 to 3 years
Preschooler = ages 3 and 4
Kindergartner/early first-grader = ages 5 and 6

Keep in mind that children don't all learn at the same pace. And even though they learn new things, they may have "old favorites," books and activities from earlier years that they still enjoy. You are in the best position to decide what activities will work best for your child.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. And you don't need to be the best reader to help her.* Your time and interest and the pleasure you share while reading together are what counts.

Children become readers step by step. By the time they are 7, most have begun to read. Some take longer than others, and some need extra help. But with the right kind of help in the early years of life, most of the reading difficulties that might arise later in life can be prevented. This book offers steps you can take to start your little one on her way to becoming a reader. It is an adventure you will not want to miss, and the benefits for your child will last a lifetime.

*For information about building family reading skills, see Resources on pages 42-43.

Note: In this book, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this for easier reading. Every point about reading in this book is the same for girls and boys alike.

Becoming a Reader

Every step a child takes toward learning to read leads to another. Bit by bit, he builds up what he knows. Over the first 6 years, most children

- hear sounds, see movements, and make connections between what they see and hear;
- talk and listen;
- pretend to read ;
- identify things in books;
- write with scribbles and drawing;
- identify letters and say them ;
- connect single letters with the sounds they make;
- predict what comes next in poems and stories;
- connect combinations of letters with sounds;

- recognize simple words;
- sum up what a story is about;
- write individual letters of the alphabet;
- write words;
- write simple sentences; and
- read simple books.

Sometimes more than one of these steps happen at the same time. In fact, when your child gets to the more advanced steps, he may still be doing many of the earlier ones. They will just come more naturally. This list of steps, though, gives you a general idea of how your child will progress. Each step along the way supports the more difficult steps that come next. (For more details, see "Typical Language Accomplishments" on page 40.)

Talking and Listening

Scientists who study the human brain have found out a great deal about how we learn. They've discovered that babies learn much more from the sights and sounds around them than we ever thought possible. You can help your baby by taking advantage of her instant hunger to learn.

From the very beginning, babies try to imitate sounds. They "read" the looks on our faces and the movements of our hands. That's why it is so important to talk, smile, and gesture to them. Hearing you talk is their very first step toward becoming readers, because it helps them love language and learn words. At this point, the best thing you can do is talk and sing to your baby. (See "Baby Talk" on page 14.)

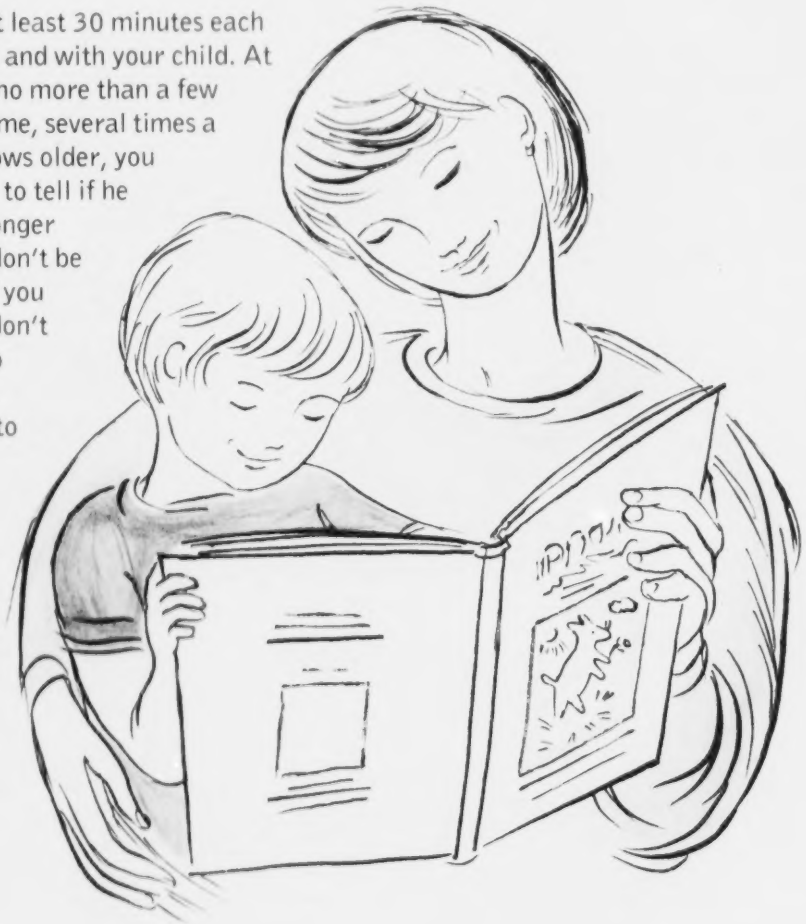
As she grows older, continue talking with your child. Ask her about the things she does. Ask her about the events and people in the stories you read together. Let her know you are listening carefully. Getting your child to use words gives her practice. You are also encouraging her to think as she speaks. And you are showing that you respect her knowledge and her ability to keep learning. (See "Chatting with Children" on page 16.)

Reading Together

Imagine sitting your baby in your lap and reading a book to him for the first time. How different from just talking. Now you're showing him pictures! You point to them. You explain what they are in a lively way. You've just taken the next step beyond talking. You've shown him that words and pictures connect. And you've started him on his way to enjoying books.

While your child is still a baby, reading aloud to him should become part of your daily routine. Pick a quiet time. Before you put him to bed is a good time; it gives him a chance to rest between play and sleep. If you can, read with him in your lap or snuggled next to you so he feels close and safe. As he gets older, he may need to move around some while you read to him. If he gets tired or restless, stop. Make reading aloud a quiet and comfortable time that your child looks forward to. Chances are he will like reading more because of it.

Try to spend at least 30 minutes each day reading to and with your child. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As he grows older, you should be able to tell if he can read for longer periods. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just get back to your daily routine as soon as you can. Most of all, make sure reading stays fun for both of you!



What Does it Mean?

From the earliest days, talk with your child about what you are reading. You might point to pictures and name what is in them. When he is ready, ask him to do the same. See if he can find the little mouse in the picture, or whatever is fun and right for the book. Later, when you read stories, read slowly and stop now and then to think aloud about what you've read. From the time your child is able to talk, ask him "What do you think will happen next?" or "Do you know what a palace is?" Answer his questions and, if you think he doesn't understand something, stop and ask. Don't worry if you break into the flow of a story to make something clear.

> *Nothing is more important in helping children become readers than reading books aloud with them.*

Learning About Print

Reading aloud together is a perfect time to help a late toddler or early preschooler learn what print is. Now and then, stop and point to letters and words as you read them; then point to the pictures they stand for. Your child will begin to understand that the letters form words and words name the picture. You are also letting him know that each letter has its own sound. This is one of the most important things your child can know when learning to read.

By the time children are 4, most have begun to understand that printed words have meaning. By age 5, most will begin to know that not just the story, but the printed words themselves go from left to right. (Follow the words with your finger to help get this message across.) Many will even be identifying some capital and small letters and simple words. (For some ideas on learning letters, see "As Simple as ABC" on page 18.)

In late kindergarten or early first grade, your child may begin to read from print himself. He may want to do it instead of you. Let him! But be sure *he* wants to do it. It should be something he is proud and eager to do, not a lesson.

Look for Books!

What books you pick to read are also important. Ask a librarian to help you find books that are right for your child's age. As your child grows older, the librarian can continue to help find exciting books for both of you. (For more information on what libraries have to offer, see pages 31 and 32.)

Introduce your baby to cardboard or cloth books with big, simple pictures of things she sees every day. Your child might want to chew or throw the book at first. But after a while, she will become more interested as you point to pictures and talk about them. When the baby becomes a toddler, she will enjoy helping choose books to read.

As she grows into a preschooler and kindergartner, the two of you can look for books with longer stories and more words on the pages. Also look for books with repeating words and sentences that she can begin to read or recognize when she sees them on the page. By early first grade, add to the mix some books designed for beginning readers, including some with chapters.

Keep in mind that during these years children most often enjoy books with people, places, and things that are like those they know. The books could be about where you live or about parts of your culture, like your religion, your holidays, or the way you dress. If your child is interested in special things, like dinosaurs or ballerinas, look for books about them.

See our Reading Checklist on pages 38-39.

Also, from the toddler years through early first grade, look for books with poems and other rhymes. Remember when your baby heard your talking sounds and tried to imitate them? Rhymes are a later step. Rhymes, along with repeated words and phrases, teach your child about sounds and words. They also spark excitement about what comes next, which adds fun and adventure to reading. (For rhyming activities, see "Rhyme with Me: It's Fun, You'll See!" on page 25.)

Show Your Child You Read

When you take your child to the library, check out a book for you. Then set a good example by reading yourself. Ask your child to get one of his books and join you while you read a book, magazine, or newspaper. Don't worry if you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability. Just doing it counts. When your child sees that reading is important to you, he may decide it is important to him, too. (For ideas on how to help your child love books, see "A Home for My Books" on page 22.)

How Does a Book Work?

Children are fascinated by how a book looks and feels. They see how easily you work with it, and they want to make it work, too. When your toddler watches you handle books, she begins to learn that a book is for reading, not tearing or tossing around. Before she is 3, she may even pick one up and pretend to read, an important sign that she is beginning to know what a book is for. As your child becomes a preschooler, she is learning that

- a book has a front cover;
- a book has a beginning and an end;
- a book has pages;
- a page has a top and a bottom;
- you turn pages one at a time to follow the story; and
- you read a story from left to right.

As you read with your 4- or 5-year-old, begin to remind her about these things. Read the title on the cover. Talk about the picture there. Point out where the story starts, and later where it ends. Let your child help turn the page. When you start a new page, point to where the words of the story continue and keep following them with your finger. These things take time to learn. But when your child learns them, she has solved some of reading's mysteries.

Early Efforts To Write

Writing is another important part of language. When he is about 2 years old, give your child crayons and paper to draw and scribble on. He will have fun choosing which colors to use and shapes to make. He will also be learning muscle control. When he is a late toddler or early preschooler, he will grow as eager to write as he is to read. The two skills go hand in hand. As he is learning one, he learns the other. You can do certain things to make sure he gets every opportunity to practice both. (See "As Simple as ABC" on page 18 and "Write On!" on page 28 for ideas on how to encourage your child's desire to write.)

Your young preschool child's scribbles or drawings are his first writing. He will soon begin writing the alphabet letters. Writing them helps your child learn about their different sounds. In fact, his very early learning about letters and sounds gives him ideas about how to begin spelling words. When he begins writing them down, don't worry that they are not spelled correctly. Instead, praise him! Because if you look closely, you'll see that he's made a pretty good try at spelling a word for the first time. With help from teachers (and you) later on, he will learn the right way to spell. Right now, he has taken a great step toward being a writer!

Reading in Another Language

If your child's first language is not English, she can still become an excellent English reader and writer. She is a step ahead if she is beginning to learn many words and is interested in learning to read in her first language. You can help by supporting her in her first language as she learns English. Talk with her, read with her, encourage her to draw and write. In other words, do the same kinds of activities mentioned before, but do them in your child's first language.

When your child first enters school, you may want to talk with her teacher. Schools welcome such talks. Teachers even have sign-up times early in the year, though you may usually ask for a meeting at any time. If it will help, ask a relative, neighbor, or someone else in your community to go with you.

When you go, tell the teacher the things you are doing at home to strengthen your child's speaking and reading in her own language. Let the teacher know how important this is to you and ask for help. Children who can switch back and forth between languages have accomplished something special. We should praise and support them as they work for this achievement.

See Resources on pages 46-47 for some multiple-language books.

Activities

What follows are ideas for language activities. You can do them with your child to help her build the skills she needs to become a reader. Most public libraries offer free use of books, magazines, videos, computers, and other services. Other things you might need for these activities are not expensive.

For each set of activities, we show an age span suggesting when children should try them. From one activity to the next, we continue to talk about children at different stages: babies (birth to 1 year), toddlers (1 to 3 years), preschoolers (ages 3 and 4), and kindergartner/early first-graders (ages 5 and 6). Remember that children don't always learn the same things at the same speed. And they don't suddenly stop doing one thing and start doing another just because they are a little older. So, the ages given are just rough guides for you to use as your child learns and grows.

You'll see that your role in the activities will change, too. Just as you hold your child up when she's learning to walk, you will help her a lot when she's taking her first language steps. As she grows, you will gradually let go—and she will take more and more language steps on her own. That is why in most of the activities it says, "The first activities . . . work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more."

As a parent, you can help your child *want* to learn in a way no one else can. That desire to learn is a key to her later success. Enjoyment is important! So, if you and your child don't enjoy one activity, move on to something else. You can always go back later.

Baby Talk

For babies from birth to 1 year

Babies love hearing your voice. When you answer her sounds with sounds of your own, she begins to learn that what she "says" has meaning and is important to you.

What To Do

- Talk to your baby often. Answer her coos, gurgles, and smiles. Repeat the "ba, ba's" and "ga, ga's" she makes. Talk, touch, and smile back. Get her to look at you.

- Play simple talking and touching games with your baby. Ask, "Where's your nose?" Then touch her nose and say playfully, "There's your nose!" Do this several times, then switch to an ear or knee or her tummy. Stop when she or you grow tired of the game.

- Change the game by touching the nose or ear and repeating the word for it several times. Do this with objects, too. When she hears you name something over and over again, she begins to connect the sound with what it means.

- Do things that interest your baby. Vary your tone of voice, make funny faces, sing lullabies, and recite simple nursery rhymes. Play "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake."

It's so important to talk to your baby! With your help, her coos and gurgles will one day give way to words.

Books and Babies

For babies from age 6 weeks to 1 year

Sharing books is a way to have fun with your baby and start him on the road to becoming a reader.

Try To Find

Cardboard or cloth books with large, simple pictures of things that babies are familiar with

Lift-the-flap, touch-and-feel, or peek-through play books (Example: *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt is a classic touch-and-feel book. See page 45 for more suggestions.)

What To Do

- Read to your baby for short periods several times a day. Bedtime is always a good time, but you can do it at other times, too—while in the park, on the bus, or even at the breakfast table (without the food!).
- As you read, point out things that are fun to do in the pictures. Name them as you point to them.
- Give your baby sturdy books to look at, touch, and hold. Allow him to peek through the holes or lift the flaps to discover surprises.

Babies soon recognize the faces and voices of those who care for them. As you read to your baby, he will form a link between books and what he loves most—your voice and closeness.

Chatting with Children

For children ages 1 to 6

Continue talking with your older child as you did with your baby. Talking helps him learn language skills and lets him know what he says is important.

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Talk with your toddler often. When feeding and bathing and dressing him, ask him to name or find different objects or clothing. Point out colors, sizes, and shapes.

- Talk with your child as you read together. Point to pictures and name what is in them. When he is ready, ask him to do the same.

- Teach your toddler to be a helper by asking him to find things. When cooking in the kitchen, give him pots and pans or measuring spoons to play with. Ask him what he is doing and answer his questions.

- Whatever you do together, talk about it with your child. When you eat meals, take walks, go to the store, or visit the library, talk with each other. These and other activities give the two of you a chance to ask and answer questions. "Which flowers are red? Which are yellow?" "What else do you see in the garden?" Challenge your child by asking questions that need more than a "Yes" or "No" answer.

Talking and having conversations play a necessary part in helping a child's language skills grow.

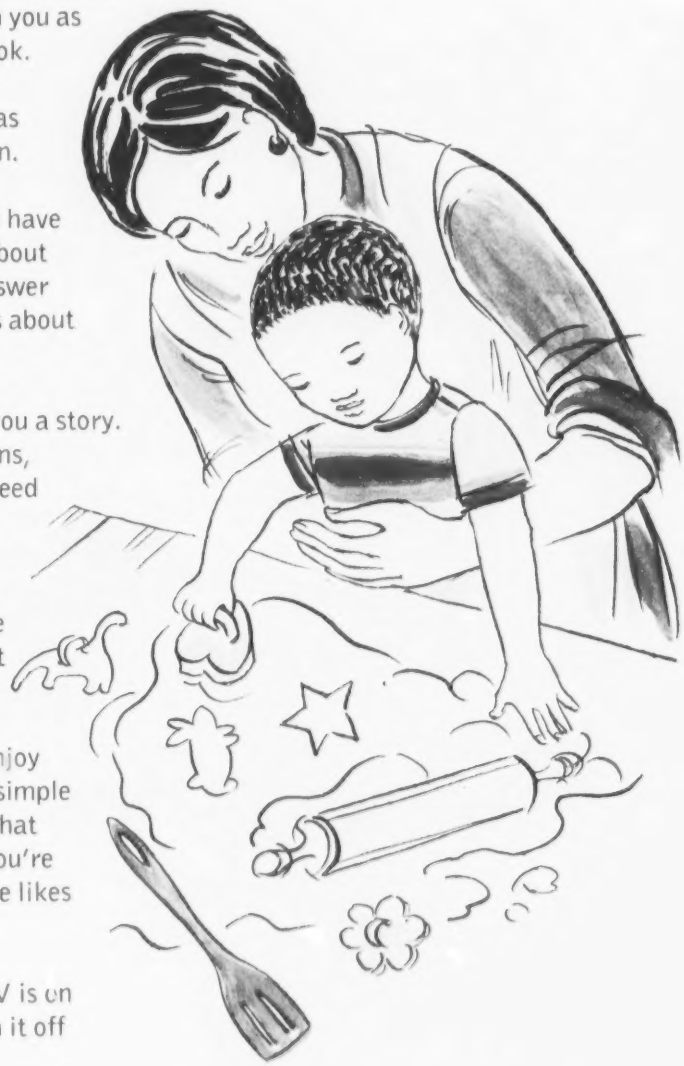
- Listen to your child's questions patiently and answer them just as patiently. If you don't know the answer, have him join you as you look it up in a book. He will then see how important books are as sources of information.

- Talk about books you have read together. Ask about favorite parts and answer your child's questions about events or characters.

- Have your child tell you a story. Then ask him questions, explaining that you need to understand better.

- When he is able, ask him to help you in the kitchen. He could set the table or decorate a batch of cookies. A first-grader may enjoy helping you follow a simple recipe. Talk about what you're fixing, what you're cooking with, what he likes to eat, and more.

- Ask yourself if the TV is on too much. If so, turn it off and talk!



As Simple as ABC

For children ages 2 to 6

Sharing the alphabet with your child helps him begin to recognize the shapes of letters and link them with sounds. He will soon learn the difference between individual letters—what they look like and what they sound like.

Try To Find

Alphabet books (see page 46 for ideas)
Paper, pencils, crayons, markers
Glue and safety scissors
ABC magnets

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- With your toddler by your side, print the letters of his name on paper and say each letter as you write it. Make a name sign for his room or other special places. Have him decorate the sign by pasting stickers or drawing on it.
- Teach your child the alphabet song and play games using the alphabet. Some alphabet books have songs and games you can learn together.
- Look for educational videos and TV shows that feature letter learning activities for young children, such as "Sesame Street." Watch such programs with your child and join in on the rhymes and songs.
- Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or another smooth, safe metal surface. Ask your child to name the letters he plays with and the words he may be trying to spell.
- Wherever you are with your child, point out certain letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines. When he is 3 to 4 years old, ask him to begin finding and naming some letters.

When you show your child letters and words over and over again, he will identify and use them more easily when learning to read and write. He will be eager to learn when the letters and words are connected to things that are part of his life.

- When your child is between ages 3 and 4, encourage him to spell and write his name. For many children, their names are one of the first words they write. At first, he may use just one or two letters (for example, Emile, nicknamed Em, uses the letter "M").

- Make an alphabet book with your kindergartner. Have him draw pictures (you can help). You can also cut pictures from magazines or use photos. Paste each picture into the book. With your child, write next to the picture the letter that stands for the object or person in the picture (for example, "B" for bird, "M" for milk, and so on).

* "Nanook" means polar bear in the Inupiaq language. The Inupiaq people are one of seven Alaska Native Eskimo groups.

What Happens Next?

For children ages 2 to 6

Books with words or actions that appear over and over again help youngsters to predict or tell what happens next. These are "predictable" books. Children love to figure out how a story may turn out!

Try To Find

Books with repeated phrases, questions, or rhymes —"predictable" books (Example: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr. See page 46 for more ideas.)

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

- Read "predictable" books to your child. Teach her to hear and name repeating words, colors, numbers, letters, animals, objects, and daily life activities. Once she gets to know a book, she may pretend to read it herself.

- Pick a story that has repeated phrases or a poem you and your child like. Together, take on the voices of the characters. This part from *The Three Little Pigs* is a good example:

  Wolf Voice: *Little pig, little pig, let me come in.*

  Little Pig: *Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin.*

  Wolf Voice: *Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!*

  Your child will learn the repeated part and have fun joining in with you each time it shows up in the story. Pretty soon, she will join in before you tell her.

"Predictable" books help children understand how stories progress. A child easily learns familiar phrases and repeats them, pretending to read. "Pretend reading" gives a child a sense of power and courage to keep trying.

- Read books that give hints about what might happen next. Such books have your child lifting flaps, looking through cut-out holes in the pages, "reading" small pictures that stand for words, and searching for many other clues. Get excited along with your child as she hurries to find out what happens next.

- When reading "predictable" books, ask your child what she thinks will happen. See if she points out picture clues, if she mentions specific words or phrases, or if she connects the story to something that happens in real life. These are important skills for a reader to learn.

A Home for My Books

For children ages 2 to 6

Starting a home library for your child shows him how important books are. Having books of his own in a special place boosts the chance that your child will want to read even more.

Try To Find

Books at bookstores, garage sales, flea markets, used book stores, and sales run by your neighborhood library

A bookcase, a cardboard box, or other materials to make a place for books

When collecting and reading books are a part of family life, you send your child a message that books are important, enjoyable, and full of new things to learn.

What To Do

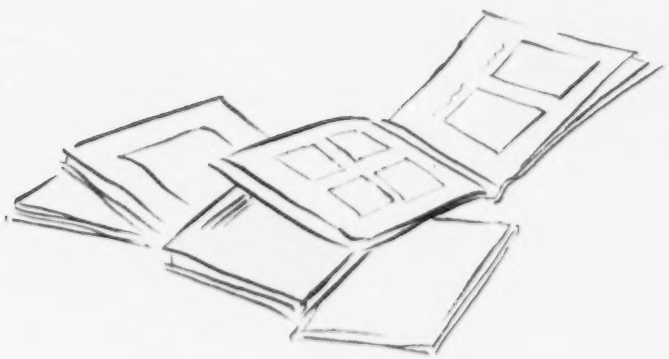
- Pick a special place for your child's books so he knows where to look for them. A cardboard box that you can decorate together might make a good bookcase. Or clear a shelf and make a special place for him to put his books with the family books.

- Help your child arrange his books in some order—his favorite books, books about animals, holiday books. Use whatever method will help him most easily find the book he's looking for.

- Borrow books from your neighborhood library (see "Visiting the Library" on page 31). Go to the children's section and spend time with your child reading and selecting books to take home and put in his special place. You might even have a box or space just for library books, so they don't get mixed up with his other books.

- Encourage family and friends to give books as presents to your child for birthdays and other occasions.

- When you and your child make your own books, you can add them to your home library. (For ideas on making books, see "As Simple as ABC" on page 18 and "Write On!" on page 28.)



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

For children ages 3 to 6

Books that have no words, just beautiful pictures, invite you and your child to use your imagination and make up your own stories.

Try To Find

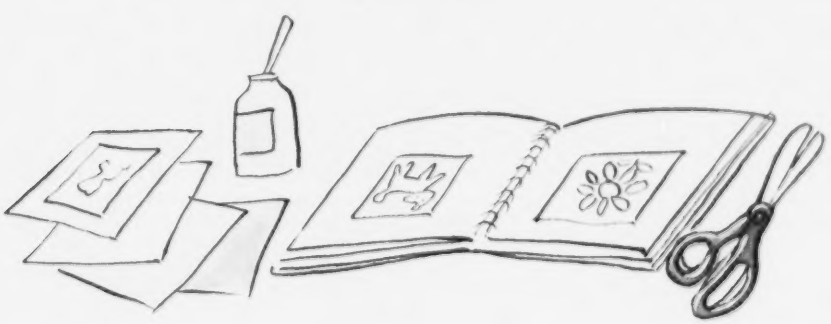
Wordless picture books (Example: *Do You Want To Be My Friend?* by Eric Carle. See page 46 for more ideas.)
Old magazines
Safety scissors
Construction paper

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

Using wordless picture books can help improve children's language and spark their imagination.

- Look through the whole book with your child. Ask her what she thinks the story is about. Tell the story together by talking about each page as you both see it.
- Ask your child to identify objects, animals, or people on each page. Talk with her about them and ask her if they are like real life.
- Have your child tell another child or family member a story using a wordless picture book. Doing this will make her feel like a "reader" and will encourage her to continue learning to read.
- Have your child create her own picture book with her drawings or pictures you help her cut from magazines.



Rhyme with Me: It's Fun, You'll See!

For children ages 3 to 6

Rhyming helps children to connect letters with sounds.

Try To Find

Books with rhyming words, games, or songs

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Play rhyming games and sing rhyming songs with your child. Many include hand clapping, playing with balls, and playing in groups.
- Read rhymes to your child. When reading a familiar one, stop before a rhyming word and encourage your child to fill in the rhyme. When he does, praise him.
- Listen for rhymes in songs you know or hear on the radio, TV, at family or other gatherings, and sing them with your child.
- Encourage your child to play rhyming games on a computer, if one is available. (See "Learning with Computers" on page 32. Also see page 47 for computer game suggestions.)

Children around the world have fun with rhyming games and songs. Here are a few rhyming books to look for: *Shake It to the One That You Love the Best: Play Songs and Lullabies from Black Musical Traditions* by Cheryl Warren Mattox; *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* by Jack Prelutsky; *Diez Deditos: 10 Little Fingers and Other Play Rhymes and Action Songs from Latin America* by Jose-Luis Orozco; and *My Very First Mother Goose* by Iona Opie. See page 46 for more ideas.

Take a Bow!

For children ages 3 to 6

When children act out a good poem or story, they show their own understanding of what it is about. They also grow as readers by connecting emotion with the written word.

Play acting helps a child learn that there are more and less important parts to a story. She also learns how one thing follows another.

Try To Find

Poems or stories written from a child's point of view
Things for using in a child's play (dress-up clothes, puppets)

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

- Read a poem slowly to your child. Read it with feeling, making everything seem important.
- If your child has a poem she especially likes, ask her to act out a favorite line or two. When she is done, praise her for doing a good job.
- Ask your child to act out the poem (or a part of it). Ask her to make a face of the way the character in the poem is feeling. Remember that making different faces adds emotion to the performer's voice. You are her audience, so again praise her and clap your hands.
- Tell your child that her family would love to see her perform her poem. Set a time when everyone can be together. When your child finishes her performance, encourage her to take a bow while everyone claps and cheers loudly.
- Encourage your child to make up her own play from a story she has read or heard. It can be make-believe or from real life. Help her find or make things to go with the story—a pretend crown, stuffed animals, a broomstick, or whatever the story needs. Some of her friends or family also can help. You can write down the words, or help her write them, if she is old enough. Then stage the play for everyone to see!

Family Stories

For children ages 3 to 6

Family stories let your child know about the people who are important to him. They also give him an idea of how one thing leads to another in a story.

The storyteller's voice helps your child hear the sounds of words and how they are put together to mean something.

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Tell your child stories about your parents and grandparents or others who are special to you and your family. You might even put these stories in a book and add old photographs.

- Think out loud about when you were little. Make a story out of something that happened, like a family trip, a birthday party, or when you lost your first tooth.

- Have your child tell you stories about what she did on special days, such as holidays, birthdays, and family vacations.

- If you go on a trip, write a trip journal with your child to make a new family story. Writing down the day's special event and pasting its photograph into the journal ties the family story to a written history. You can also include everyday trips like going to the store or the park.

Write On!

For children ages 3 to 6

Reading and writing support each other. The more your child does of each, the better she will be at both.

Try To Find

Pencils, crayons, or markers
Writing paper or notebook
Construction paper
Yarn or ribbon
Cardboard or heavy paper
Safety scissors

What To Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

- Write with your child. From the time she is almost a preschooler, she will learn a lot about writing by watching you write. Talk about your writing with her so she begins to understand that writing means something and has many uses.

- Have your young preschooler use her way of writing—perhaps just a scribble—to sign birthday cards or make lists.

- Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Offer to write notes there for your child. Be sure she finds notes left for her there.

- Ask your preschooler to tell you simple stories while you write them down. Question her if you don't understand something.

- Encourage your preschooler to write her name and practice writing it with her. Remember, at first she may use only the first letter or two of her name.

- Help your child write notes to relatives and friends to thank them for gifts or share her thoughts. Encourage them to answer your child with a note.

- When she is in kindergarten, she will begin to write words the way she hears them. For example, she might write "haf" for have, "frn" for friend, "Frd" for Fred. Ask her to read her "writing" to you. Don't be concerned with correct spelling. She will learn that later.

- As your child gets older, she can begin to write or tell you longer stories. Ask questions that will help her organize the stories. Answer questions about letters and spelling.

- Turn your child's writing into books. Paste her drawings and writings on pieces of construction paper. Make a cover out of heavier paper or cardboard; add special art, a title, and her name as author. Punch holes in the pages and cover, and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon.

When a child is just beginning, she tries different ways to write and spell. Our job as parents is to encourage our children's writing so they will enjoy putting what they think on paper.

3
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Other Ways To Help

All of the activities we've discussed so far offer a rich experience for your child as she builds her language skills. But you can do even more to support her learning.

Visiting the Library

Libraries offer more than books. They are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Ask about getting a library card in your child's name and get one for yourself if you don't have one.

The Librarian

Introduce yourself and your child to your librarian. Librarians can help you find out how to select the best books that are fun and good for your child's age level. They can also show you what other programs and services the library has to offer. If you would like reading help for yourself or your family, check with the librarian about literacy programs in your community. (Also see literacy resources on pages 42-43.)

Books, and More

In addition to a wealth of books, you might find tapes of books, musical CDs and tapes, movies, computers you can use, and more. You might find books in languages other than English, or programs to help adults improve their reading.

Supervised Story Times

- **Babies and toddlers.** Many libraries have group story hours that are short and set up by age. Your child sits in your lap, and both of you can join in the story. The librarian may show you finger-plays and rhythm activities. The librarian may also give you tips and handouts that you can use for home story hours.

- **Preschoolers.** The library may offer these story hours more than once a week. You and your child usually read several books on the same topic. You might play games, sing songs, use puppets, or do other activities that are connected to that topic. You may also get ideas for books to read and other things to do at home.

- **Families.** Families can read together, or they may join in a story told by the library storyteller. Some libraries also set up family activities around the readings for the week, including watching movies and making projects.

Summer Reading

After the school year is over, some children may forget what they have learned about reading. Libraries help keep children interested in reading by offering summer programs. Children from early elementary school to high school read books on their own. Their school or library gives them a diary or log where they write down what they read during the summer. At the same time, many libraries offer "Read-to-Me" clubs to encourage reading aloud to preschool and younger children, since this is so important in fostering a love of reading.

Also check at your local library for AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: READ*WRITE*NOW! summer reading materials. The materials offer ideas for parents, caregivers, and others who volunteer as learning partners in helping youngsters keep and improve their reading skills during the summer. (For more about AMERICA READS, see page 42.)

Learning with Computers

Computers can't replace the reading and writing activities mentioned earlier in this book. But computers can support what these activities teach your child.

Many computer programs (also called software) offer activities that can both grab your child's interest and teach good lessons. Children as young as 3 years old, though they can't read yet, may still have fun using some of the colorful, action-filled programs with enjoyable characters (see page 47 for ideas). Computer reading programs let your child

- hear stories, read along, and read by herself;
- play with objects and characters on the screen that teach the alphabet, simple words, rhyming words, and similar things;
- command the computer with her voice, record herself reading, and play it back so she can hear herself;
- write simple sentences and make up stories;
- add pictures and characters to her stories and have them read back;
- make and print her own books;
- make slide shows; and
- gain praise and see improvement in her abilities.

Finding and Using a Computer

If you don't have a computer at home, ask your librarian if you and your child may use one of the library's computers. Your child's school or a nearby community college might also have a computer laboratory you may use. Ask your librarian about good computer programs. Try a few. They can help you learn basic computer steps before working with your child. This experimenting could help you feel more comfortable with computers if you've never used one before. Your librarian may be able to tell you where you can get computer training if you want it.

When sitting at a computer with your child, join in at first. Later, watch as she plays. Always praise and guide her when you need to. Make sure you choose the right programs for your child's age. Often, one program may have activities for many ages. As your child grows, the program gets more challenging. In fact, if you have children of different ages, the same program can allow each to learn and practice different skills.

There are many good children's programs available, but they vary in quality. If you can, try the software before you buy it. Also, you can check at your local library for reviews of children's software. Don't hesitate to ask your librarian or your child's teacher for information and recommendations about good software.

You can also get useful computer programs through the Internet, a hookup of computers around the world. Many programs are available through "Web sites," which are addresses on the World Wide Web, a part of the Internet. Organizations like libraries, colleges, and government offices give people information through their Web sites . Businesses and other private groups also give—and sell—information over their Web sites. Good children's programs are available this way, but again, the quality of such material varies and you will need to be careful in your choices. For help on how you can use a computer to hook up to the Internet and find what you need, check with your librarian.

Some Useful Computer Resources

Parents Guide to the Internet published by the U.S. Department of Education (call toll free 1–877–4ED–PUBS to request a free copy or order through the World Wide Web at **http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html**);

The Connected Family: Bridging the Digital Generation Gap by Seymour Papert and Nicholas Negroponte;

The Parents' Pocket Guide to Kids and Computers published by the Family Computer Workshop; and

Young Kids and Computers: A Parent's Survival Guide published by Children's Software Revue.

For more resources, see "Some Other Interesting Web Sites for Parents and Caregivers" on page 45, "Computer Programs" on pages 47–48, and "Young Children and the Internet: Places To Learn and Play" on page 48.

Taking Charge of TV

Many children enjoy TV, and they can learn from it. Keep in mind, though, that small children often imitate what they see, good or bad. It's up to you to decide how much TV and what kinds of shows your child watches.

- Think about your child's age and choose what types of things you want him to see, learn, and imitate.

- Look for shows that
  —teach your child something,
  —hold his interest,
  —encourage him to listen and question,
  —help him learn more words,
  —make him feel good about himself, and
  —introduce him to new things.

- Shows such as "Sesame Street," "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," and "Arthur" are some you may want to consider. Many other good children's programs are on public television stations and on cable channels, such as Disney and Nickelodeon.

- Limit the time you let your child watch. Too much television cuts into important activities in a child's life such as reading, playing with friends, and talking with family members.

- Watch TV with your child when you can. Talk with your child about what you see. Answer his questions. Try to point out the things on TV that are like your child's everyday life.

- When you can't watch TV with your child, spot check what he is watching. Ask questions after the show ends. See what excites him and what troubles him. Find out what he has learned and remembered.

- Go to the library and find books that explore the themes of the TV shows your child watches. Or help your child make a book based on a TV show, using his drawings or pictures cut from magazines.

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If You Think There's a Problem

Your child may resist being read to or joining with you in the activities in this book. If so, keep trying, but keep it playful. Remember that children vary a great deal in the way they learn. Don't be concerned just because your child doesn't enjoy a certain activity that a friend of the same age does. It is important, though, to keep an eye on how your child is doing (see box on next page).

When a child is having a language or reading problem, the reason could be simple to understand and deal with or it could be complicated. Often, children may just need more time to learn their language skills. On the other hand, some children might have trouble seeing, hearing, or speaking. Others may have a learning disability. If you think your child may have some kind of physical or learning problem, it is important to get help quickly.

If your child is in school or preschool and you think she should be doing better with her language skills, ask for a private meeting with the teacher. (You may feel more comfortable taking a friend, relative, or someone else in your community with you.) In most cases, the teacher or perhaps the principal will be able to help you understand how your child is doing and what you might do to help.

There is a law—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—that may allow you to get certain services for your child from your school district. Your child might qualify for help from a speech and language therapist or other specialist, or qualify to receive materials designed to match his needs. You can learn about your special education rights and responsibilities by requesting a summary of legal rights in your native language from the school. To find out about programs for children with disabilities available in your state, contact the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. See page 44 for the address, phone number, and for other resources.

The good news is that no matter how long it takes, most children can learn to read. Parents, teachers, and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem and provide the right help as soon as possible. When a child gets such help, chances are very good that he will develop the skills he needs to succeed in school and in life. *Nothing is more important for your child as he goes through school than your support. Make sure he gets any extra help he might need as soon as possible and encourage and praise his efforts.*

As a parent, you can learn a lot about your child's learning and watch for signs of possible problems. Here are some things to look for and discuss with his teacher:

- Starting at age 3 or 4: Does your child remember nursery rhymes and can he play rhyming games?
- At about age 4: Does your child have difficulty getting information or directions from conversations or books that are read aloud to him?
- Kindergartners: Is your child beginning to name and write the letters and numbers that he sees in signs, books, billboards, and other places?
- At age 5: Can your child play and enjoy simple word games that use alliteration, in which two or more words start with the same sound? For example: "Name all the animals you can think of that start with 'w'."
- At ages 5 and 6: Does your child act as if he understands that spoken words can be broken down into smaller parts (for example, noticing "big" in "bigger")? Does he seem to understand that you can change a small part of a word and make it something very different (for example, by changing the first letter of a word like "cat," you can make "hat" and "bat" and so on)?

Remember that children learn in different ways and at different rates. It is often difficult to measure how well they are learning.

Adapted from *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*, National Research Council, National Academy Press: Washington, DC: 1999.

A Reading Checklist

There are many ways to encourage your child to become involved in reading. Here are some questions to ask yourself to keep you on track:

For Babies (6 weeks to 1 year)

- Do I provide a comfortable place for our story time? Is my child happy to be here?
- Am I showing her the pictures in the book? Am I changing the tone of my voice as I read to show emotion and excitement?
- Am I paying attention to how my child responds? What does she especially like? Is she tired and ready to stop?

For Toddlers (1 to 3 years)

All of the questions above, plus:

- Does my child enjoy the book we are reading?
- Do I encourage her to "pretend read," joining in where she has memorized a word or phrase?
- When I ask questions, am I giving my child enough time to think and answer?
- Do I tie ideas in the book to things familiar to my child? Do I notice if she does this on her own?
- Do I let my child know how much I like her ideas and encourage her to tell me more?
- Do I point out letters, such as the first letter of her name?

Remember: Children learn step by step in a process that takes time and patience. They vary a great deal in the rate they make progress and in what holds their interest .

For Preschoolers (3 and 4 years)

All of the questions above, plus:

- Do I find ways to help my child begin to identify letters and make the letter-sound matches?

For Kindergartners (5 years):

All of the questions above, plus:

- Do I find ways to help my child begin to identify some printed words?
- Do I let my child retell favorite stories to show she knows how the story goes and what's in it?

For Beginning First-Graders (6 years):

All of the questions above, plus:

- Do I give my child the chance to read a story to me using the text, picture clues, her memory—or any combination of these ways that help her make sense of the story?

Typical Language Accomplishments for Children, Birth to Age 6

Most children learn to read by age 7. Learning to read is built on a foundation of language skills that children start learning at birth— a process that is both complicated and amazing. Most children develop certain skills as they move through the early stages of learning language. The following list of such accomplishments is based on current research in the field,* where studies continue and there is still much to learn. As you look over the list, keep in mind that children vary a great deal in how they develop and learn. If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, talk with your child's doctor, teacher, or a speech and language therapist. For children with any kind of disability or learning problem, the sooner they can get the special help they need, the easier it will be for them to learn.

From birth to age 3, most babies and toddlers become able to

- make sounds that imitate the tones and rhythms that adults use when talking;
- respond to gestures and facial expressions;
- begin to associate words they hear frequently with what the words mean;
- make cooing, babbling sounds in the crib which gives way to enjoying rhyming and nonsense word games with a parent or caregiver;
- play along in games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake";
- handle objects such as board books and alphabet blocks in their play;
- recognize certain books by their covers;
- pretend to read books;
- understand how books should be handled;
- share books with an adult as a routine part of life;
- name some objects in a book;
- talk about characters in books;
- look at pictures in books and realize they are symbols of real things;
- listen to stories;
- ask or demand that adults read or write with them;
- begin to pay attention to specific print such as the first letters of their names;
- scribble with a purpose (trying to write or draw something); and
- produce some letter-like forms and scribbles that resemble, in some way, writing.

*Based on *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, a report of the National Research Council, by the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, released March 1998, and the *Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*, adopted May 1998.

From ages 3-4, most preschoolers become able to

- enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks;
- understand that print carries a message;
- make attempts to read and write;
- identify familiar signs and labels;
- participate in rhyming games;
- identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches; and
- use known letters (or their best attempt to write the letters) to represent written language— especially for meaningful words like their names or phrases such as "I love you."

At age 5, most kindergartners become able to

- sound like they are reading when pretending to read;
- enjoy being read to and retell simple stories;
- use descriptive language to explain or to ask questions;
- recognize letters and letter-sound matches;
- show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds;
- understand that print is read left-to-right and top-to-bottom;
- begin to match spoken words with written ones;
- begin to write letters of the alphabet and some words they use and hear often; and
- begin to write stories with some readable parts.

At age 6, most first-graders can

- read and retell familiar stories;
- use a variety of ways to help with reading a story—such as rereading, predicting what will happen, asking questions, or using visual cues or pictures;
- decide on their own to use reading and writing for different purposes;
- read some things aloud with ease;
- identify new words by using letter-sound matches, parts of words, and their understanding of the rest of a story or printed item;
- identify an increasing number of words by sight;
- sound out and represent major sounds in a word when trying to spell;
- write about topics that mean a lot to them; and
- try to use some punctuation and capitalization.

Resources for Families and Caregivers

Federal Offices or Federally Funded Clearinghouses Providing Information on Literacy and Learning

U.S. Department of Education (ED)

ACCESS ERIC
Toll Free: 1-800-LET-ERIC
http://www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/parent.html
Source for ERIC Parent Brochures series, including "How Can I Encourage My Young Child To Read." Also provides referrals to all of ERIC—the Educational Resources Information Center, a national education information system supported by ED. Two ERIC Clearinghouses of particular interest are:

- **ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network (NPIN)** at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (**http://npin.org**); and
- **ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication** at Indiana University (**http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec**)

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)
University of Michigan School of Education
610 East University Avenue, Room 1600 SEB
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259
Phone: 734-647-6940
http://www.ciera.org
The national research and development center on early childhood reading funded by ED. CIERA's mission is to improve the reading achievement of America's children by developing and offering solutions to persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading.

Even Start Family Literacy Program
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202
Toll Free: 1-800-USA-LEARN
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/CEP/programs.html#prog3
Even Start provides support for family-centered education projects to help parents learn the literacy and parenting skills they need to help their young children reach their full potential as learners. Grants are made to local education agencies, community-based organizations, and other nonprofit organizations. To find out about programs in your state, contact your state department of education or your local school district office.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)
800 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
Toll Free: 1-800-228-8813
http://www.nifl.gov
Jointly administered by the Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, NIFL is an independent federal institute. The NIFL Hotline is available 24 hours a day to provide free referrals for potential students and volunteers to outstanding programs in their area. Also provides free copies of current publications on literacy.

National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20208
Phone: 202-219-1935
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI
Sponsors research that focuses on early childhood development and education, especially school readiness, child/adult relationships, and children's resilience.

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202
Toll Free: 1-800-USA-LEARN
http://www.pfie.ed.gov/
Provides materials for families, schools, employers, and community groups. Be sure to ask about the ***AMERICA READS CHALLENGE*** *program (http://www.ed.gov/inits/americareads/) and its summer component* ***READ*WRITE*NOW!***

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Early Head Start/Head Start Program
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Administration for Children, Youth, and Families
Washington, DC 20202-0001
Phone: 202-205-8572
(or check directory for regional HHS office)
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/
Head Start programs nationwide provide comprehensive services for 3- to 5-year-old children of low-income families. Grants are made to public school systems and nonprofit organizations to fund services covering education, health care, family involvement, and social services. Early Head Start programs—modeled after Head Start—provide services to low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. To find out about programs in your state, contact your state department of education or your local school district.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 3006
Rockville, MD 20847
Toll Free: 1-800-370-2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm
Provides information about government-sponsored research on human development over the entire life span. Included are topics such as prenatal care, learning disabilities, AIDS, and mental retardation.

Private Resources Dealing with Literacy and Reading

For information about adult and family literacy programs in your community, be sure to check at your local public library. Other resources on literacy and reading include:

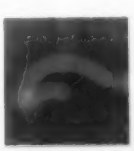
American Library Association (ALA)
Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
Toll Free: 1-800-545-2433, ext. 2163
http://www.ala.org/alsc/
ALA/ALSC sponsors "Born To Read," a program that builds partnerships between librarians and health care professionals to reach out to new and expectant "at-risk" parents to help them raise children who are "born to read." Publications and online resources include materials for parents, caregivers, and children.

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
Phone: 302-731-1600
http://www.reading.org/
An organization of teachers, librarians, researchers, parents, and others dedicated to promoting high levels of literacy for all. Online Bookstore offers books, videos, and software for parents and caregivers.

Literacy Volunteers of America
635 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13202-2214
http://literacyvolunteers.org
Sponsors 375 community programs in 42 states that offer free literacy help to adults and their families. To find out more, check Web site or write to address above, or e-mail at lvanat@aol.com.

National Center for Family Literacy
Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
325 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
Toll Free (Parade Family Literacy InfoLine):
1-877-326-5481
http://www.famlit.org
Parade Family Literacy InfoLine provides referrals for family literacy programs at the local level. Accessible 24 hours a day; operators are available 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday-Friday.

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
P.O. Box 23444
Washington, DC 20026
Toll Free: 1-877-RIF-READ
http://www.rif.org/
Develops and delivers children's and family literacy programs that help prepare young children for reading and motivate school-age children to read. Trains literacy providers, parents, and others to prepare all children to become lifelong readers.



Resources If Your Child Has a Reading Problem or Learning Disability

Federal or Federally Funded Clearinghouses

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
Toll Free: 1-800-328-0272
http://www.ericec.org/
Provides research-based information on a variety of topics, including learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and behavior disorders.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
Toll Free: 1-800-370-2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm
See complete listing under "Federal Offices or Federally Funded Clearinghouses Providing Information on Literacy and Learning" (page 43).

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013-1492
Toll Free: 1-800-695-0285 (voice & TTY)
http://www.nichcy.org
Provides referrals and information on disabilities and related issues for families, educators, and others, with a focus on children and youth (birth to age 22). Funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education—the federal office that administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Other Awareness and Advocacy Organizations

Learning Disabilities Association of America
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Toll Free: 1-888-300-6710
http://www.ldanatl.org
A nonprofit volunteer organization advocating for individuals with learning disabilities. The association has more than 60,000 members and 600 state and local affiliates nationwide.

National Center for Learning Disabilities
381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1401
New York, NY 10016
Toll Free: 1-888-575-7373
http://www.ncld.org
A national nonprofit organization committed to improving the lives of those affected by learning disabilities. Provides materials designed to increase public awareness and understanding.

Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities
c/o Communications Consortium Media Center
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-1754
Phone: 202-326-8700
http://www.ldonline.org/ccldinfo/
A collaboration of leading national learning disability organizations dedicated to improving awareness and understanding about the nature of learning disabilities.

Federal Source of Materials for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20542
Phone: 202-707-5100
http://www.lcweb.loc.gov/nls/nls.html
A free national library program of braille and recorded materials for blind and physically handicapped children and adults.

Books for Parents

The books below are just a few of the many excellent books on reading with children. Check with your library for more books and children's book lists.

Beaty, Janice. ***Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books: For Children 3-5*** Merrill, 1997. A listing of selected multicultural picture books for young children. Includes activities to do with children that are based on the books listed.

Butler, Dorothy. ***Babies Need Books: Sharing the Joy of Books with Children from Birth to Six*** Heinemann, 1998. Discusses the importance of reading to young children and gives summaries of books by age level.

Muse, Daphne, ed. *The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* The New Press, 1997. Includes reviews of hundreds of children's books from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook* Penguin, 1995. Discusses the importance of reading aloud to children. Includes a "Treasury of Read-Alouds"—hundreds of recommended books annotated by age and grade level.

Some Other Interesting Web Sites for Parents and Caregivers

The Children's Book Committee:
http://www.bnkst.edu/bookcommittee

Children's Software Revue:
http://www.childrenssoftware.com/

Family Computer Workshop:
http://familycomputerworkshop.com

Family Education Network:
http://www.familyeducation.com

Family Web Corner:
http://www.nauticom.net/www/cokids

Gryphon House (activity books and children's literature):
http://www.ghbooks.com/

Kidsource: **http://www.kidsource.com**

National Association for the Education of Young Children: **http://www.naeyc.org**

Parent Soup: **http://www.parentsoup.com**

Resources for Children

Here's a sampling of books, computer programs, and Web sites that you and your children can enjoy together. Check with your local library for more suggestions.

Babies

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon* Harper Collins, 1997. A little rabbit says goodnight to all the things in his room and, finally, to the Moon.

Johnson, Angela. *Mama Bird, Baby Birds* Orchard, 1994. Joshua and his sister, two young African-American children, watch a mother bird feeding its babies.

Wells, Rosemary. *Max's Bedtime* Dial, 1998. Even though Max's sister offers him her stuffed animals, he cannot sleep without his red rubber elephant.

Play Books for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Carle, Eric. *The Very Busy Spider* Philomel, 1984. Farm animals try to keep a spider from spinning her web, but she doesn't give up and she makes a beautiful and useful creation. Pictures may be felt as well as seen, making this a great book for visually impaired children.

Hill, Eric. *Where's Spot?* Putnam, 1980. In an interactive lift-the-flap book, children help Spot's mother, Sally, search the house to find him. This book is translated into a number of languages, including a sign language version.

Lacome, Julie. *Seashore* Candlewick, 1995. Small fingers can poke through the holes in the pages of this board book about the beach, and seem to change into fins, wings, or crawling legs.

Alphabet Books for Preschoolers-First-Graders

MacDonald, Suse. ***Alphabatics***. Bradbury Press, 1986. The letters of the alphabet are transformed and placed in 26 illustrations so that the hole in "b" becomes a balloon and "y" turns into the head of a yak (an ox with long hair).

Rankin, Laura. ***The Handmade Alphabet***. Dial, 1991. This book presents the handshape for each letter of the manual alphabet (American Sign Language) accompanied by an object whose name begins with that letter.

Shelby, Anne. ***Potluck*** Orchard, 1991. A multicultural collection of friends having names starting with A-Z bring a variety of dishes to a potluck.

Wordless Picture Books for Preschoolers-First-Graders

dePaola, Tomie. ***Pancakes for Breakfast***. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978. A little old lady's attempts to have pancakes for breakfast are hindered by a lack of ingredients and the help of her pets.

Mayer, Mercer. ***A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog*** Dial, 1967. The story is about a boy and a dog, and a frog they try unsuccessfully to catch.

McCully, Emily. ***School*** Harper & Row, 1987. The eight oldest mice in a family prepare for the first day of school. After everyone leaves, and the house is too quiet, the youngest mouse decides to go and discover what school is all about.

Wiesner, David. ***Tuesday*** Clarion, 1991. One night a town is invaded by extraterrestrial frogs flying in on their lily pads.

Rhyming Books for Toddlers-Kindergartners

Christelow, Eileen. ***Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*** Clarion, 1989. This counting rhyme shows five little monkeys getting ready for bed and getting sidetracked by some serious bed-jumping.

Cole, Joanna and Calmenson, Stephanie. ***Eentsy, Weensty Spider: Fingerplays and Action Rhymes*** Morrow, 1991. This book, illustrated using children of diverse cultural backgrounds, includes fingerplays and action rhymes that have been chanted, sung, and loved by generations.

Dyer, Jane. ***Animal Crackers: A Delectable Collection of Pictures, Poems and Lullabies for the Very Young*** Little, Brown, 1996. This beautiful picture book contains a collection of Mother Goose classics, modern poems, lullabies, and simple stories, many of which celebrate special times in a child's first years.

Martin, Bill, Jr. and Archambault, John. ***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom***. Simon & Schuster, 1989. Enjoy reading aloud the rhythmical story of letters of the alphabet climbing and falling from a coconut tree.

"Predictable" Books for Toddlers-First-Graders

Aardema, Verna. ***Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain*** Dutton, 1993. Told in verse, this is the story of how Ki-pat, a herder, gets it to rain on the dry Kapiti Plain.

Hutchins, Pat. ***Rosie's Walk*** Macmillan, 1968. Rosie the hen goes for a walk and manages to avoid many attempts on her life by a predatory fox. Also available in Spanish.

Lowell, Susan. ***The Three Little Javelinas*** Northland Pub., 1993. This southwestern tale, based on the story of The Three Little Pigs and illustrated with Native American and Latino characters, is about three little javelinas as they try to outsmart the coyote who had hoped to eat them with red chili sauce.

McNaughton, Colin. ***Suddenly!*** Harcourt Brace, 1995. Time after time, Preston the Pig outwits a hungry wolf that is trying to catch and eat him.

Multiple-Language Books for Preschoolers-First-Graders

Brown, Ruth. ***Alphabet Times Four: An International ABC*** Dutton, 1991. Beginning with the letter "A" and ending with "Z," this book offers a word that happens to begin with the same letter in four languages, English, Spanish, French, and German accompanied by creatively bordered pictures.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. ***Family Pictures***. Children's Book Press, 1990. In this bilingual text (Spanish and English), a young girl remembers her day-to-day family life while growing up in Texas in a Mexican-American culture.

Hirschi, Ron. ***Seya's Song***. Sasquatch Books, 1992. A young S'Klallam girl follows the seasons of the salmon, interweaving aspects of the life and culture of her Pacific Coast tribe and using words from her native language.

Lee, Huy Voun. ***In the Park***. Henry Holt & Co, Inc., 1998. Xiao Ming and his mother go to the park, where they see a variety of people of different cultures, ages, and disabilities. At the park, his mother teaches him how to draw and pronounce some Chinese characters.

Rattigan, Jama Kim. ***Dumpling Soup***. Little, Brown, 1993. Marisa, a 7-year-old girl who lives in Hawaii, explains the traditions her family celebrates at the New Year. Hawaiian, Japanese, and Korean words and phrases add to the English text.

Stock, Catherine. ***Where Are You Going Manyoni?*** Morrow, 1993. Manyoni lives in Zimbabwe and on her way to school she passes many beautiful areas, wild animals, and birds. The book includes a picture glossary of wildlife and a key to pronouncing African words.

Beginning Readers

Eastman, P.D. ***Go, Dog. Go!*** Random House, 1989. Big dogs, little dogs—black, white, yellow, and blue dogs—they are all very busy going places and doing things.

Krauss, Ruth. ***The Carrot Seed***. Harper Collins, 1973. A little boy knows a carrot will grow from the seed he planted no matter what anyone else may say or think.

Early Read-Aloud Chapter Books for Preschoolers-First-Graders

Cameron, Ann. ***The Stories Julian Tells***. Knopf, 1981. Julian tells great stories. He can make people, especially his younger brother Huey, believe almost anything, which sometimes leads to lots of trouble.

Milne, A.A. *The House at Pooh Corner*. Dutton, 1991. The book is about the timeless adventures of Pooh, Piglet, Christopher Robin, Owl, Tigger, and Eeyore in the Hundred-Acre Woods.

Children's Magazines

Babybug. The Cricket Magazine Group, P.O. Box 7437, Red Oak, IA 51591-2437
(**http://ww.cricketmag.com/babybug/index.html**)
Board-book magazine with illustrated rhymes and stories for parents to read with children ages 6 months to 2 years.

Sesame Street Magazine. Children's Television Workshop, One Lincoln Plaza, New York, NY 10023
(**http://www.ctw.org/sesame/** or **http://www2.cdsfulfillment.com/SST/subscriptions.cgi**)
Sesame Street characters are featured in stories, poems, puzzles, posters and more. (Ages 2 to 6 years)

Your Big Back Yard. National Wildlife Federation, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA 22184
(**http://www.nwf.org/ybby/**)
Includes stories, poems, riddles, and games, with color pictures of animals. Simple text designed to encourage early reading. (Ages 3 to 6 years)

Computer Programs

Living Books: Interactive Animated Stories
(Ages 3-7)

These programs provide a place for children to hear a story, read along with the narrator, or read by themselves. They also can interact with characters and objects and play games that teach the alphabet, simple words, rhyming, and other reading skills. Each program also comes with the matching book. Some examples of titles:

Just Grandma and Me
The Cat and the Hat
Arthur's Birthday
Dr. Seuss's ABC

Many include versions in Spanish, French, and German along with the English text.

For more information, contact:
Broderbund Software, Inc.
500 Redwood Boulevard
P. O. Box 6121
Novato, CA 94948-6121
Toll Free: 1-800-567-2610
http://www.broder.com

Bailey's Book House (Ages 2–5)

From Edmark, this software features Bailey and his friends as they encourage young children to build literacy skills and develop a love for reading. It includes activities to help youngsters explore letters, words, sentences, rhyming, and stories. No reading skills are required; all directions are spoken.

Let's Go Read! An Island Adventure (Ages 4–7)

Children join Robby Raccoon and his friends in their adventures on an island inhabited by the alphabet. Included are activities to help children learn reading basics such as letter sounds and how to sound out and build simple words. Children can command the computer with their voices and record and listen to themselves reading.

For more information, including Spanish titles and a catalog for children with special needs, contact:
Edmark Software
P.O. Box 97021
Redmond, WA 98073-9721
Toll Free: 1-800-362-2890
http://www.edmark.com

Young Children and the Internet: Places To Learn and Play

Arthur: **http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/arthur/**

Barney: **http://www.barneyonline.com**

Disney: **http://www.family.disney.com**

Dr. Seuss's Seussville:
http://www.randomhouse.com/seussville/university/

PBS Homepage: **http://www.pbs.org/kids/**

Children's Television Workshop: **http://www.ctw.org**

Alex's Scribbles: **http://www.scribbles.com.au/max/**

Smithsonian Institution-National Zoo:
http://www.si.edu/natzoo

Story Hour, The Internet Public Library:
http://www.ipl.org/youth/StoryHour/

Kids on the Web (for all ages):
http://www.zen.org/~brendan/kids.html

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National Center for Education Statistics (1999). *The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1998 reading report card*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

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Andrea DeBruin-Parecki received her doctoral degree from the combined program of education and psychology at the University of Michigan, where she worked closely with professors who direct the national Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. She is on the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa's Educational Psychology Department in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Dr. DeBruin-Parecki is an expert on family literacy programs, particularly for low-income families, and currently serves on the International Reading Association's Family Literacy Committee.

About the Illustrator

Barbara McGee, a freelance artist from Greenbelt, Maryland, did the inside illustrations. Her portfolio includes other OERI publications, including the award-winning *Helping Your Child Learn Geography*, published in 1996. In addition, she teaches art to preschoolers and elementary-school students in Prince George's County, Maryland. She is the Director of Programming for the Greenbelt Association of Visual Arts. The association has established several programs for children, including an after-school drop-in art program where local youngsters paint and sculpt.

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Good health can help your child be a better learner. Now there are more opportunities for families to get free or low-cost health insurance coverage for their children under age 19. Your state may have a new **children's health insurance program (CHIP)** for families with low and moderate incomes, including working families. Some states are making Medicaid available for more children.

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